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First report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2061 (2012)

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 6 of its resolution 2061 (2012), the Security Council requested me to report to it every four months on the progress made towards the fulfilment of the responsibilities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The present report is the first submitted pursuant to that resolution. It provides an update on the activities carried out by the United Nations in Iraq since the issuance of my previous report, dated 11 July 2012 (S/2012/535). It covers key political developments and regional and international events, in addition to operational and security matters concerning Iraq.

II. Summary of key political developments pertaining to Iraq

A. Internal developments

2. During the reporting period, political blocs pursued their consultations aimed at resolving the continuing political stalemate in Iraq. While there were several initiatives in this regard, no tangible progress was made on any of them. The National Alliance and its leader, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, met all the political blocs in an attempt to bring parties together and resolve outstanding issues through a reform package initiative. The content of the package has not been made public and has reportedly not been shared in writing with other blocs. The intensive consultations notwithstanding, this initiative has not yet garnered widespread support among the parliamentary blocs.

3. On 7 August, the Deputy Prime Minister, Saleh al-Mutlaq, resumed his participation in Cabinet meetings, thereby marking the end of a political dispute that had begun in December 2011. On 27 August, however, the Minister of Communications, Mohammed Allawi, resigned, alleging political interference in his ministry. The Minister of State for Provincial Affairs, Turhan al-Mufti, has been acting in his stead. In addition, the discussions on the matter stemming from December 2010 notwithstanding, the ministers of defence and the interior have not yet been appointed.

4. On 8 August, the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Usama al-Nujaifi, stated that attempts to conduct a parliamentary inquiry into the Prime Minister, Nuri

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al-Maliki, had been frozen in the light of the continuing reform initiative. The Prime Minister subsequently appeared before the Council of Representatives on 15 September, urging it to vote in favour of an infrastructure bill under which the Government would be authorized to allocate $37 billion for infrastructure projects.

5. At the end of Ramadan, intensive political consultations resumed. On 26 August, the Prime Minister and the Speaker agreed on the following five points: accelerating a number of legislative processes, including the oil and gas law; reaching a joint vision on foreign relations; using the Constitution as the reference point for resolving differences; nominating the heads of the security ministries as soon as possible; and supporting the proposed reform initiative.

6. Consultations between political leaders have further intensified since the return of the President, Jalal Talabani, on 17 September, after receiving medical treatment abroad. He held several meetings with the President of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Massoud Barzani, the Prime Minister and the Speaker. To date, however, these efforts have remained inconclusive.

7. During the reporting period, the Council of Representatives extended the term of the outgoing Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission three times, after its expiry on 28 April. On 13 September, the Council voted in favour of maintaining the number of Commissioners at nine. It endorsed the first eight candidates on 17 September and the last, the sole woman, on 27 September.

8. On 17 July, the Council established a joint committee on the holding of elections in Kirkuk Governorate, comprising six parliamentarians: three members of the legal committee and three members of the regions and governorates committee. The joint committee held four special sessions with the Speaker on 15 and 25 September and 1 and 10 October. The Speaker also visited Kirkuk on 24 September, where he stressed the importance of holding the delayed elections.

9. On 9 September, one of the Vice-Presidents of Iraq, Tariq al-Hashimi, who has been in Turkey since April, was sentenced to death after being convicted in absentia on terrorism-related charges. On the same day, the Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, ruled out handing him over to the Iraqi authorities. On 10 September, the Vice-President denounced the verdict as politically motivated. On 1 November, an Iraqi court sentenced him to death for a second time after he was convicted of involvement in a plot to assassinate an official of the Ministry of the Interior.

10. On 16 October, the Court of Cassation upheld an appeal filed by the three outgoing Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission, including its Chair, thus nullifying a ruling handed down on 28 August in which they had been sentenced to a suspended one-year prison term and prohibited from holding public office in the future, following their conviction in a corruption case. On 16 October, the Integrity Commission announced the opening of an investigation into alleged illegal speculation in relation to the Iraqi currency, including insider manipulation of its value against the United States dollar. On 18 October, the spokesperson of the Supreme Judicial Council announced that arrest warrants had been issued for the Governor of the Central Bank of Iraq, Sinan al-Shabibi, and 15 other bank officials. No charges have yet been specified.

11. Various sources of contention continued to affect relations between the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government. On 15 August, the office of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Baghdad was closed at the request of the Office of the Prime Minister owing to the lack of a proper licence. The office had been established in July 2006. Earlier, on 27 July, the Iraqi army deployed its thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth regiments to the Faysh Khabur crossing point to strengthen border controls with the Syrian Arab Republic. The movement led to a stand-off with the eighth brigade of the Peshmerga, with the Kurdistan Regional Government arguing that the national Government had failed to notify it of the deployment plans, in violation of an agreement that they had reached in 2008. On 4 August, both parties signed a seven-point agreement providing for the withdrawal of the additional forces dispatched to Faysh Khabur after 27 July. To date, however, they have maintained their respective positions.

12. In addition, on 8 September, all Kurdish political parties, under the chairship of the President of the Kurdistan Regional Government, rejected the decision of the national Government to establish the Tigris Operations Command, a new command bringing together the existing security forces in Kirkuk and Diyala Governorates. Earlier, on 6 September, the Kirkuk Governorate Council had requested the Government of Iraq to rescind its decision. Furthermore, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan alleged that the Iraqi armed forces had moved troops and heavy weapons into Kirkuk in mid-October. The Government of Iraq has denied the allegation.

13. On 2 August, however, the Kurdistan Regional Government announced the resumption of oil exports, which had been suspended since April, and gave the national Government one month to pay the dues owed to international oil companies operating in the Kurdistan Region before exports would be suspended again on 31 August. On 1 September, it extended the deadline for payments before again suspending oil exports until 15 September. On 12 September, the Council of Representatives formed a committee to expedite the adoption of the delayed oil and gas law. The committee includes representatives of the main parliamentary blocs, members of the legal, oil and energy committees of the Council and representatives of the Presidency of the Council. On 13 September, the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government reached an agreement, according to which the latter would increase oil exports to 200,000 barrels per day in return for the commitment of the former to paying some $850 million to international oil companies. On 8 October, the first tranche of approximately $530 million was paid.

14. On 1 September, the Presidency of the Council of Representatives decided to decrease the membership of the parliamentary committee on article 140 of the Constitution from 34 to 17 members to improve its performance. This restructuring was rejected by Arab members from Kirkuk and Ninewa Governorates. On 14 October, in a related development, the legal committee of the Council approved a bill on the redemarcation of administrative boundaries redrawn from 1968 to 2003. The President of Iraq had initially submitted the draft in October 2011. While the Kurdistan Alliance welcomed the development, Al-Iraqiya and Sunni tribal leaders from Anbar Governorate expressed concern about the bill, arguing that it could lead to further complications.

15. From 20 to 23 October, in an encouraging development, a governmental delegation headed by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional

Government, Imad Ahmed, and a political delegation headed by the Deputy Secretary-General of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, Barham Saleh, visited Baghdad to consult senior Government officials and political stakeholders on outstanding issues between the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government. The parties agreed to continue their consultations in the near future.

B. Regional and international developments

16. The escalating conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic continues to have serious humanitarian, security and political repercussions for Iraq. On 18 July, following the bombing of buildings belonging to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in Damascus, the Government of Iraq urged Iraqi citizens to return to Iraq and, on 19 July, a high-level interministerial committee was established to help the tens of thousands of Iraqis who subsequently re-entered Iraq by land or air. Through various diplomatic channels, the Government expressed its opposition to any further militarization of the conflict and continued to engage actively in favour of a political solution. It has expressed its full support for the efforts of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, Lakhdar Brahimi. On 15 October, Mr. Brahimi visited Iraq, where he met the President, the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hoshyar Zebari, who reiterated their support for a peaceful solution to the conflict.

17. On 11 July, the President of the Kurdistan Regional Government met members of the Kurdistan National Council (a Kurdish political bloc composed of 14 Kurdish political parties in the Syrian Arab Republic), the People's Council of Western Kurdistan (led by the Democratic Union Party in the Syrian Arab Republic) and a smaller political faction comprising Syrian Arab elements to discuss the situation in the northern Syrian Arab Republic. These groups formed the Supreme Kurdish Council to unify their political stand. On 3 September, a similar meeting was held in Erbil, in the presence of the President of the Kurdistan Regional Government, to reaffirm agreement regarding the management of Kurdish areas in the northern Syrian Arab Republic, which have been under de facto Kurdish control since July.

18. Their noticeable improvement early in 2012 notwithstanding, bilateral relations between Iraq and Kuwait remain characterized by a mutual lack of confidence. This prevailed during the reporting period owing to a lack of progress in the fulfilment by Iraq of its outstanding obligations under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations pertaining to Kuwait and on the resolution of several bilateral issues. On 27 September, on the margins of the general debate of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, the Iraqi delegation, led by one of the Vice-Presidents, Khudayr al-Khuzai, met the Kuwaiti delegation, headed by the Prime Minister, Sheikh Jaber Al Mubarak Al Hamad Al Sabah, to discuss bilateral issues and the outstanding obligations of Iraq pertaining to Kuwait. On 29 September, a follow-up meeting was held between the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait. In a positive development, on 23 October, the Emir of Kuwait issued a decree in which he endorsed the agreement of 18 July on the Iraqi Airways issue between the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait, paving the way for a final resolution of the Kuwaiti lawsuits against Iraqi Airways.

19. At the joint request of the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait, the United Nations initiated, and completed on 1 October, the procurement process for the Iraq-Kuwait boundary maintenance project pursuant to Security Council resolution 833 (1993). The technical team deployed to Kuwait during October to be ready to begin field maintenance work on 31 October, as requested by the parties. To date, the Government of Iraq has not removed the obstacles between boundary pillars, an earlier agreement with the Government of Kuwait in this regard notwithstanding. In addition, it has yet to respond to the United Nations proposal to transfer the funds for the payment of compensation to Iraqi private citizens pursuant to Security Council resolution 899 (1994).

20. During the reporting period, my High-level Coordinator for the repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains and the return of all Kuwaiti property, Gennady Tarasov, continued his efforts in accordance with his mandate pursuant to paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 1284 (1999). From 18 to 21 September, he visited Kuwait to consult the Iraqi and Kuwaiti authorities and other relevant stakeholders. His visit coincided with the seventy-sixth session of the Technical Subcommittee of the Tripartite Commission.

21. On 10 October, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1957 (2010), Iraq's Additional Protocol to its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency entered into force.

22. On 2 August, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Ahmet Davutoğlu, met the President of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Erbil to discuss security in the region in relation to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. On the following day, he visited Kirkuk, where he met local officials. The Government of Iraq condemned the visit to Kirkuk, stressing that it had not been arranged with the appropriate Iraqi authorities.

23. During the reporting period, the Turkish armed forces intensified their military operations, including aerial bombing and artillery shelling, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq against the Kurdistan Workers Party in response to its cross-border terrorist attacks. On 11 October, the parliament of Turkey approved a Government-sponsored motion to extend for one year authorization for the Turkish armed forces to carry out air and land incursions into northern Iraq in pursuit of elements of the Kurdistan Workers Party. Earlier, the Government of Iraq had criticized that motion, arguing that it violated the sovereignty of Iraq, and has warned the Government of Turkey that it may close down the Turkish forward operating bases in Iraq.

III. Activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the United Nations country team

A. Political activities

24. During the reporting period, UNAMI continued its intensive engagement with parliamentary blocs to encourage them to finalize the selection of the new Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission. Negotiations centred on the size and composition of the Board. UNAMI convened multiparty meetings with representatives of the parliamentary blocs on 17, 26 and 29 July. My Special Representative, Martin Kobler, held multiparty meetings with the Council of

Representatives on 30 July and 1 August to encourage leaders to reach an agreement. His intensive facilitation efforts also included meetings with the Speaker on 28 July and 5 August; the First Deputy Speaker, Qusay al-Suhail, on 1 August; the leader of the National Alliance on 1 and 7 August; and minority caucuses on 28 July. Throughout this process, he repeatedly called for the parties to ensure that women would be represented on the new Board.

25. Concerning the delayed Kirkuk Governorate Council elections, UNAMI intensified its engagement with stakeholders in the Council of Representatives and in the Governorate on a way forward. On 20 July, the Speaker issued a letter in which he confirmed the participation of UNAMI as an adviser to the joint committee of the Council established on 17 July regarding the organization of the elections. On 1 October, the joint committee requested UNAMI to prepare a proposal on a mechanism to secure Kirkuk before and during the elections.

26. On 27 September and 16 October, respectively, my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs, Electoral Assistance and Constitutional Support, György Busztin, and my Special Representative visited Kirkuk, where they met senior officials of the Governorate, including the Chair of the Governorate Council, Hasan Turan, and the Governor, Najmeldin Karim, to consult local stakeholders on the elections and the role of UNAMI. While the stakeholders agreed that there was a need to hold elections, they continued to differ on the modalities.

27. UNAMI also continued to work with relevant stakeholders on the establishment of the Federation Council. On 9 October, the Council of Representatives formally launched the legislative process to enact the law on the Federation Council, thereby reinitiating the process to formally establish the body. On 17 October, my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs, Electoral Assistance and Constitutional Support met the First Deputy Speaker of the Council of Representatives and the President of the Shura Council to facilitate the establishment of the Federation Council.

28. From 21 to 26 September, in accordance with the regional mandate of UNAMI, my Special Representative held consultations with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq and the Prime Minister of Kuwait on the margins of the general debate of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly in order to facilitate dialogue on all outstanding issues.

29. On 12 September, my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs, Electoral Assistance and Constitutional Support visited Najaf and met members of the Shiite religious establishment, including grand ayatollahs Muhammad Sa'id al-Tabtab'i al-Hakim, Mohammad Ishaq al-Fayyad and Bashir Husayn al-Najafi, to exchange views on domestic, regional and international issues of concern.

30. On 12 July, my Special Representative met a broad spectrum of women representatives of civil society organizations working on issues relating to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. Welcoming the initiative, the representatives encouraged UNAMI to intensify its engagement with Iraqi political leaders to support women's participation in political processes and institutions. On 9 October, UNAMI and the United Nations country team also supported Thi-Qar Governorate in observing its first-ever local Open Day on Women, Peace and Security, which featured the participation of representatives of the Government, civil society and the media. The

participants highlighted that poverty, illiteracy and unemployment remained the most significant barriers to women's advancement and made several recommendations, including that the implementation of the National Action Plan on Human Rights should be strengthened.

B. Electoral assistance activities

31. The new Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission, which had been fully sworn in by 28 September, is the third since 2004. It comprises four Shiite Arabs, two Sunni Arabs, two Kurds and a Turkmen, the only female. Seven are former senior and middle managers of the Commission, while one is a judge and a member of the largest network of electoral observers in Iraq. In addition to its political facilitation efforts mentioned above, UNAMI played an important role in advising the Iraqi authorities on the design and implementation of a credible and transparent selection process, which began in 2011.

32. During the reporting period, steps were taken towards the timely organization of the Governorate Council elections. The Council of Representatives approved amendments to the electoral law regarding the number of candidates on each constituency list, the database to be used for developing the voter registry and for defining the number of seats per district, the conditions for voting by military and security personnel and a greater number of reserved seats for minorities at the Governorate and district levels. On 3 September, at the request of the Commission, a subsequent amendment was passed to generate the voter registry. The Commission received a first tranche of funds of some $8.7 million of the requested electoral budget of $160 million.

33. On 30 October, the Government announced that the Governorate Council elections would be held on 20 April 2013. Work is continuing for the voter registration update scheduled to begin in December 2012, including the preparation of the preliminary voters lists, registration materials, regulations and procedures and the recruitment of voter registration staff. Equipment is also being purchased to upgrade the infrastructure of the data entry centre and to develop and test the software to enter data from registration forms.

34. The United Nations integrated electoral team, comprising UNAMI, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office for Project Services, continued to provide technical advice and capacity-building assistance to the Commission. Through the institutional support project funded by the United Nations Development Group Iraq Trust Fund, UNDP and the United Nations Office for Project Services built the capacity of the Commission in several areas, including the management of its governorate offices, the delivery of training and the use of Global Positioning System/Geographic Information System mapping for polling and other electoral locations.

C. Human rights activities and developments

35. During the reporting period, indiscriminate, mass-casualty terrorist attacks continued throughout Iraq, except in the Kurdistan Region, killing and injuring scores of civilians. Members of the security forces continued to be frequent victims of targeted assassinations or kidnappings, or were killed or injured in attacks on the

security infrastructure. Members of the various religious and ethnic groups and minorities, in particular those living in areas of the country characterized by tensions arising from long-standing territorial and other disputes, continued to be attacked.

36. On 23 July, a series of coordinated terrorist attacks left more than 100 people dead and at least 300 injured. On 16 August, another string of terrorist attacks killed more than 90 people and injured at least 200. On 9 September, a series of 13 bombings killed 77 people and injured 340. On 30 September, another series of coordinated terrorist attacks killed at least 33 people and injured some 90. On 27 October, a series of bombings in Baghdad killed at least 30 people and injured more than 100. Hundreds of other deadly attacks against civilians and security personnel occurred nationwide during the reporting period.

37. Children were also among the victims of these indiscriminate terrorist attacks. In this regard, the country task force on monitoring and reporting grave violations against children, led by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNAMI, verified the deaths of 34 children and the maiming of 82 others in Iraq in July and August. Direct attacks on schools and medical facilities have also been reported, as have allegations of recruitment of children by terrorist groups. Cooperation has been established with the Ministry of Human Rights to increase reporting and verification of incidents affecting children. A formal mechanism to interact on issues pertaining to children affected by armed conflict pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) has yet to be established by the Government, however.

38. Frequent appeals for a moratorium on the implementation of the death penalty in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions notwithstanding, the Iraqi justice system continues to impose and implement capital punishment for serious crimes. Since my previous report, 43 individuals have been executed, bringing the total to 113 for 2012, in comparison with 67 in 2011 and 18 in 2010. On 27 August, the Ministry of Justice announced the execution of 21 people, including 3 women. On 29 August, it announced the execution of five people, including a Syrian national and a Saudi Arabian national. On 4 and 7 October, it announced the execution of 6 and 11 people, respectively, including an Algerian national. Most of those executed were convicted under article 4 of the Anti-Terrorism Act. On 9 September, a convicted child rapist was reportedly publicly hanged in al-Zubair, Basra Governorate, without having had an opportunity to appeal against his sentence.

39. Honour killings and other forms of gender-based violence remain common in Iraq. Such crimes are particularly well documented in the Kurdistan Region, whose Government and civil society are making steady progress in raising awareness of them and in bringing their perpetrators to justice. In July and August, in the Kurdistan Region, there were 12 known cases of killings and suicides, 66 attempted or successful self-immolations, 192 cases of physical violence, 28 acts of sexual violence and 518 complaints of oral and other forms of abuse. The increase in the number of incidents being reported in the Kurdistan Region may indicate growing confidence among women there that they can speak out against such violence and seek protection.

40. During its regular visit to places of detention throughout Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region, UNAMI noted that many detainees continued to be held for prolonged periods in pretrial detention and that many facilities failed to meet basic

humanitarian standards. UNAMI also continued to receive allegations of torture. In a positive development, on 15 July, the Ministry of Justice granted UNAMI unfettered, confidential access to all detainees held in facilities under its control and promised to consider and to implement recommendations arising from the Mission's monitoring visits to detention facilities that it operated. UNAMI is currently seeking similar access agreements for detention centres operating under the authority of the ministries of labour and social affairs, defence and the interior.

41. Foreign migrant workers continue to be exposed to violations of their labour rights throughout Iraq. Ignorance of legal norms and lack of support from employers often result in many workers coming into conflict with the law over irregularities in their immigration status, sometimes leading to detention and lengthy prison sentences.

42. In August, the Council of Representatives postponed its vote on the bill on the Federal Supreme Court. Several parties objected to a draft provision therein that would give scholars in Islamic law (4 of the 17 members of the Court) the authority to veto any bill contradicting Islamic law. The draft provision has raised particular concern among the non-Muslim minorities in Iraq. The adoption of a general amnesty law covering persons convicted of a range of crimes committed since 2003 has been postponed owing to disagreement among political parties on the scope of the law, especially regarding persons convicted under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

43. From 8 to 15 September, UNAMI, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNDP conducted a workshop in Morocco for the Commissioners of the Independent High Commission for Human Rights who were appointed by the Council of Representatives in April. It afforded the Commissioners the opportunity to learn from the experiences of other national human rights institutions and to develop draft regulations for the future conduct of the Commission's mandated operations. As a result of the workshop, the Commissioners agreed on an organizational structure, vision and mission statement for the Commission.

44. On 19 September, the Federal Supreme Court upheld a case brought by three women's groups to increase the number of women among the Commissioners from four to five. The 2008 law under which the Independent High Commission for Human Rights was established stipulates that one third of the Commissioners should be women. On 4 October, my Special Representative met the Speaker to advocate the expeditious implementation of the Court's ruling and to encourage the Board of Commissioners to select the President and Deputy President of the Commission as required by the law.

45. On 14 July, in Erbil, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UNAMI, along with representatives of civil society organizations, media professionals, academics, officials from the Ministry of Human Rights, representatives of the Kurdistan Regional Government and members of the Council of Representatives, launched the Federation of Human Rights Defenders, whose prime objective is to monitor human rights in Iraq. UNESCO continued to support the Federation.

Camp New Iraq (formerly Camp Ashraf)

46. During the reporting period, UNAMI facilitated intensive negotiations for the resumption of transfers of residents from Camp New Iraq to the temporary transit facility of Camp Hurriya. Transfers took place on 29 August, 16 September and 11 October, bringing the total number of residents in Camp Hurriya to 3,112. In addition, 94 truckloads of property were transferred during the reporting period. Some 100 residents of Camp New Iraq have still to be relocated before the closure and handover of the facility to the Government.

47. On 11 September, the Government organized a visit to Camp Hurriya for 20 representatives of the diplomatic community to demonstrate that the conditions there exceeded basic humanitarian standards. On 28 September, the Department of State of the United States of America revoked the designation of the Mujahedin e-Khalq and its aliases as a foreign terrorist organization.

48. In parallel to the relocation process, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had completed registration for 2,704 individuals and conducted in-depth interviews of 1,046 individuals as at 18 October. A total of 637 individuals had been determined to have international protection needs, while the cases of the other individuals interviewed were being processed. Simultaneously, UNHCR is seeking lasting solutions for individuals with identified international protection needs through the resettlement, consular and/or parole channels, in addition to voluntary repatriation to the Islamic Republic of Iran. To date, 16 residents have been accepted for consular solutions by Belgium, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Another 15 have been accepted for resettlement by Finland, Norway and the United Kingdom, while 1 departed on humanitarian grounds to Italy. Moreover, 71 cases were submitted for consideration by the United States for admission into the country through a parole process.

49. On 2 October, UNHCR organized a second conference on resettlement, held in Geneva, with the participation of the Government of Iraq and my Special Representative. The participants called upon Member States to accept residents recognized as persons with international protection needs and also called for alternative solutions. The conference generated only limited positive responses, however.

D. Development and humanitarian assistance

50. During the reporting period, the humanitarian spillover of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic into Iraq significantly increased. On 21 July, the Prime Minister requested support from the United Nations to assist Iraqis leaving the Syrian Arab Republic. As at 30 October, 50,409 Iraqis had returned from the Syrian Arab Republic, including some 6,000 airlifted by the Government of Iraq. The Government of Iraq is currently assisting Iraqi returnees with approximately $4,000 in cash per household. Only 861 returnee households of 4,087 registered households have to date reportedly received cash assistance.

51. On 23 July, the Government also opened its border to Syrian asylum seekers. As at 30 October, 45,269 Syrians had sought refuge in Iraq, including 36,776 in the Kurdistan Region. While the al-Waleed and Rabiaa crossing points remained open

without restriction, the al-Qaim crossing point was closed from 13 August to 18 September. Upon its reopening, the daily number of Syrian asylum seekers was restricted to 100 and excluded single men aged between 15 and 50 years. Refugee camps in Domiz, Dohuk Governorate, and al-Qaim, Anbar Governorate, are operational and expanding. To cope with the increasing number of refugees, a new camp in al-Kasak, Ninewa Governorate, is under construction and another is planned in al-Ubaidi, Anbar Governorate. UNAMI and UNHCR continued to monitor the situation at the border, in particular in the area of the al-Qaim crossing point. The humanitarian country team, under the leadership of my Deputy Special Representative for Development and Humanitarian Support, Jacqueline Badcock, continued to update contingency plans in line with the regional response plan.

52. UNHCR, in close collaboration with the humanitarian country team and the Government, in particular the Ministry for Displacement and Migration and the Governorate emergency cells, is leading the humanitarian response to the influx of Syrian refugees into Iraq. This includes establishing camps, supplying emergency lightweight and winterized family tents, registering refugees and ensuring the issuance of proper documentation, procuring and distributing various non-food items and coordinating the provision of other services in the camps. Moreover, in view of the expected extreme climate, UNHCR is winterizing the camps by distributing winter clothes and kerosene and replacing school tents with prefabricated classrooms with heating systems.

53. The World Health Organization continued to work closely with the Government and health partners to provide health care to Syrian refugees. It conducted a rapid assessment of the health situation and a nutritional assessment of Syrian refugees and supplied 10,000 curative health kits and 6,000 cholera kits for three months. UNICEF immunized all children aged under 5 years in the Domiz and al-Qaim camps and trained 1,576 health providers in the provision of antenatal and postnatal care and nutritional assistance. Furthermore, it continued to provide water, sanitation and hygiene services to more than 4,000 Syrian refugees located in both camps and supported hygiene promotion campaigns.

54. UNICEF-supported child-friendly spaces continued to provide psychosocial support and recreation activities to hundreds of Syrian refugee children in Anbar and Dohuk Governorates. In addition, UNICEF and UNHCR established 17 temporary prefabricated classrooms in the Domiz and al-Qaim camps to ensure access to education for all Syrian refugee children. School supplies and equipment were also distributed at the beginning of the academic year.

55. On 6 September, the World Food Programme (WFP) began to distribute food items to approximately 10,000 refugees in the Domiz camp and host communities in the Kurdistan Region. It is expected to begin food distribution in the al-Qaim camp in November. The International Organization for Migration continued to provide Iraqi returnees and Syrian refugees with non-food items and to conduct assessments.

56. UNHCR continued to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to Iraqi internally displaced persons and returnees. During the first eight months of 2012, a total of 173,120 internally displaced persons and 52,780 Iraqi refugees returned to their places of origin.

57. To date, 7 of 15 resident United Nations agencies, funds and programmes have relocated to Iraq and 5 are in the process of doing so. The United Nations country

team continued to mobilize funds from donors and the Government to cover the funding shortfall within the five United Nations Development Assistance Framework priority areas. As at 1 October, the total commitments to the Iraq United Nations Development Assistance Framework Fund stood at approximately $16 million.

58. Following the initial submission by the United Nations country team to the Government in May for the co-financing of projects in 2012, and after a consultative process to review and prioritize projects, the United Nations country team resubmitted on 2 September a reduced list of 28 strategic projects for co-financing by the $30 million allocated under the cost-sharing allocation for development interventions with international partners. On 3 September, at a joint meeting between the United Nations country team and the Government, co-chaired by the Chair of the Advisory Commission to the Prime Minister and the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, the participants agreed to proceed with the preparation of the project documents for the 28 submitted projects.

59. On 2 August, the United Nations country team submitted a consolidated list of 30 projects with a total budget of $38.4 million to the Kurdistan Regional Government for co-financing. The Kurdistan Regional Government is selecting specific programmes and projects that will be co-financed in 2012.

60. During the reporting period, UNICEF supported the development of integrated solid waste master plans in Thi-Qar, Sulaymaniyah and Erbil Governorates, in addition to a water and sanitation master plan for Missan Governorate. In addition, the Sarchinar water treatment plant in Sulaymaniyah Governorate was rehabilitated and now provides 445,000 people with access to safe water. UNICEF also installed water treatment units in Muthanna Governorate, built two water networks in Missan Governorate and supported the training of 315 Government staff and local non-governmental organizations in water, sanitation and hygiene. Moreover, a project on changing swamp to green areas in Missan and Thi-Qar Governorates was completed and is providing 30,000 people with a cleaner living environment.

61. WFP continued to target unemployment in some of the areas most vulnerable to violence and insecurity through a cash-for-assets programme, creating employment opportunities to improve access to food. A total of 71 cash-for-assets projects were completed during the reporting period, through which $3 million was distributed to 46,000 vulnerable people, half of whom were internally displaced or returnees. In addition, WFP continued to support efforts to reform social safety nets for vulnerable groups and develop the capacity of the staff of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to target poverty, design and target social safety nets, develop monitoring and evaluation systems, and establish an information management system.

62. The World Health Organization assisted the ministries of health and higher education to build the capacity of 470 health professionals and community leaders in key technical areas of the six building blocks of the health system: governance and leadership, health technologies and pharmaceuticals, human resources for health, health-care financing, health information systems and service delivery. Such increased capacity has assisted Iraq to develop and maintain a robust communicable disease control and surveillance system, provide better access to health services to the people and address the equity gap.

63. On 19 July, UNESCO organized a workshop that brought together 21 students, including 6 women, and 24 participants from the private sector to discuss cooperation between technical and vocational education and training institutes and the private sector in the Kurdistan Region. On 11 September, in partnership with the Government and national non-governmental organizations, UNESCO marked International Literacy Day with community-based events attended by 2,500 people. The event coincided with the launch of a national literacy campaign, which UNESCO is supporting by building the capacity of relevant stakeholders, including national non-governmental organizations and the ministries of education, youth and sports, and labour and social affairs, developing new literacy curricula and training literacy facilitators. During the reporting period, the United Nations Population Fund provided technical and financial support to the Ministry of Youth and Sports and an interministerial committee to develop a national youth strategy for the period 2013-2017.

64. On 11 September, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the Ministry of Construction and Housing of the Kurdistan Region jointly launched a housing strategy for the Kurdistan Region, in which proposals are made for a range of innovative solutions to meet the housing needs of destitute people, including rent-to-buy housing, improved access to land and affordable housing financing.

IV. Security and operational issues

65. Since my previous report, incidents of terrorism have continued, with peaks in July and September making them the two most deadly months in Iraq in the past two years. Threats made by the Islamic State of Iraq since July were closely followed by significant countrywide attacks on four occasions. The nature of the recent security incidents and the reduced intervals between significant incidents demonstrate the increased capability of terrorist groups to conduct complex and well-coordinated attacks. Criminal acts such as robberies, kidnappings and extortion are also believed to partially stem from fundraising campaigns by terrorist groups and represent an additional security concern.

66. The current status of the Iraqi security environment requires the United Nations to put in place appropriate mitigation measures and maintain an appropriate and acceptable balance between programme delivery and the safety and security of personnel and operations in the Mission area. Following a security posture review and the visit by an inter-agency security assessment mission, several initiatives are being implemented to reduce the Mission's security footprint.

V. Observations

67. Relations continue to be strained between the Iraqi political leaders, preventing progress on issues critical to the country's future. To preserve the notable achievements that Iraq has made in completing its transition to a democratic State, it is essential that its leaders reach consensus on a way forward. I therefore once again call upon them to engage in a meaningful and constructive dialogue to resolve their differences. The political leaders owe it to the citizens of Iraq who elected them to work together and pass important outstanding legislation in a spirit of partnership and national unity. In accordance with its mandate from the Security Council,

UNAMI stands ready to assist the people and the Government of Iraq to overcome their differences and focus on building a peaceful, democratic and prosperous country.

68. I am concerned by recent signs of increased tensions between the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government. Such tensions hamper progress on long-standing issues, including the disputed internal boundaries, the resolution of which is essential to the country's stability. I urge both sides to work together constructively and, in this regard, welcome the agreement reached between the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to resume oil exports from the Kurdistan Region. I am hopeful that the resolution of this disagreement will pave the way for the adoption of the much-needed oil and gas and revenue-sharing legislation by the Council of Representatives. UNAMI stands ready to provide impartial facilitation and support to stakeholders on this matter, which is vital to fostering investment and economic growth in Iraq.

69. While the negotiation process in the Council of Representatives was challenging, I welcome the agreement reached in selecting the new Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission. I should like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the outgoing Board of Commissioners for the significant contributions that it has made, in difficult circumstances, to the democratic process in Iraq since 2007. I regret, however, that, of the nine new Commissioners, only one is a woman, and call upon the Iraqi authorities to continue their efforts to ensure the adequate participation of women at all levels in political institutions and processes. UNAMI and the United Nations country team will continue to work closely with the new Board of Commissioners in its preparations for the forthcoming Governorate Council and parliamentary elections.

70. I am also encouraged by signs of progress on the organization of the overdue Governorate Council elections in Kirkuk. The holding of these elections will be an important step forward that will enable the population to exercise its right to select local representatives for the first time since January 2005. I therefore urge all parties involved to continue to work together to reach an agreement that will enable elections to take place in Kirkuk without further delay.

71. A historic opportunity is at hand for Iraq and Kuwait to normalize their relations and for Iraq to bring to an end its outstanding obligations under Chapter VII of the Charter. I urge both parties to pursue their efforts, with goodwill and a firm commitment to building on the progress that they have made to date, and to implement all agreements reached between them. Both I, and UNAMI under its Security Council mandate to facilitate regional dialogue, will continue to engage with both sides to support and sustain the necessary progress.

72. As a neighbour of the Syrian Arab Republic, the continuing conflict has increasingly serious ramifications for Iraq. This remains a source of grave concern. I urge the Government of Iraq to keep its borders open to Syrian refugees and to maintain its willingness to extend its hospitality and protection to victims of the violence in the Syrian Arab Republic who are seeking safety in Iraq. In response to the call by the Government of Iraq, the United Nations will pursue its efforts in coordination with the Government and relevant organizations to respond to the needs of Syrian refugees. In this regard, I urge Member States to do their utmost to ensure that the response to the Syrian refugee crisis is fully funded.

73. I welcome the expansion of the presence and programme delivery of the United Nations country team in Iraq. A challenging security environment notwithstanding, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes are demonstrating the commitment of the Organization to supporting the reconstruction of the country and improving the living standards of its citizens.

74. I continue to be troubled by the continued implementation of the death penalty in Iraq. I should like to reiterate my call to the Government to consider a moratorium on the implementation of all death sentences, pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 62/149, 63/168 and 65/205, and to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.

75. I thank the Government for its cooperation with the United Nations on the peaceful transfer of most of the former residents of Camp New Iraq to the temporary transit location of Camp Hurriya. I urge both the Government and the residents to continue to engage constructively for the expeditious, peaceful and orderly closure and handover of Camp New Iraq. I call upon the residents of both camps to fully abide by the laws of Iraq and upon the Government to continue to meet its international humanitarian obligations and to exercise the restraint necessary to ensure the peaceful outcome that we all desire. I reiterate my appeal to Member States to offer resettlement opportunities to residents with international protection needs as soon as possible. This is now a matter of urgency since the relocation from Camp New Iraq to Camp Hurriya is almost complete. Without the strong commitment of Member States to accepting former residents of Camp New Iraq, no sustainable solution can be achieved. I also urge Member States to continue to support the efforts of UNAMI and UNHCR by providing the financial assistance necessary to conduct United Nations activities.

76. As UNAMI and the United Nations country team continue to be adversely affected in their ability to undertake mandated activities, I wish to reiterate my appeal to the Government to take the steps necessary to bring into force the status-of-mission agreement without further delay.

77. Lastly, I wish to thank my Special Representative, Martin Kobler, and all United Nations staff serving in Iraq for their hard work and unflinching commitment to supporting the people and the Government of Iraq.